

FEBRUARY 26

I tried one of those  
poems that looks like  
what it's about.

## MY YELLOW DOG

by Jack

headhead  
bodybodybody ad he  
tail tail low body he EYE ad sniffs sniffs sniffs  
w yellow yellow body y E ad nose sniffs sniffs  
o yell body d he Ad nose  
l o body o R head  
l w body b  
e bodybodybody  
wag y leg leg leg  
wag leg leg leg leg  
wag leg leg leg leg  
leg leg leg leg  
leg leg leg leg  
leg leg leg leg  
paw paw

slobber  
slobber  
slobber

MARCH 1

Yes

you can type up  
the yellow dog poem  
that looks like a dog  
but this time  
keep the spaces  
exactly  
the same  
and maybe  
it would look  
really really good  
on yellow paper.

Maybe you could  
put my name on it.  
But only if you want to.  
Only if you think it  
looks  
good enough.

38

MARCH 7

I was

a little embarrassed

when people said  
things to me like

*Neat poem, Jack*

and

*How'd you think of that, Jack?*

And I really really like  
the one you put up  
about the tree  
that is shaped like  
a tree  
not a fake-looking tree  
but like a real tree  
with straggly branches.

But I want to know  
who is the

39

*anonymous poet*

in our class  
who wrote that  
and why didn't

he

or

she

want to put  
his or her name  
on it?

Was it like me  
when I didn't think  
my words  
were  
poems?

Maybe you will tell  
the anonymous tree poet  
that his or her tree poem

is really

a poem

really really

and a good poem, too.

MARCH 14

That was the best best BEST  
poem  
you read yesterday  
by Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
the best best BEST  
poem  
ever.

I am sorry  
I took the book home  
without asking.  
I only got  
one spot  
on it.  
That's why  
the page is torn.  
I tried to get  
the spot  
out.

I copied that BEST poem  
and hung it on my  
bedroom wall  
right over my bed  
where I can  
see it when I'm  
lying  
down.

Maybe you could  
copy it too  
and hang it  
on the wall  
in our class  
where we can see it  
when we are sitting  
at our desks  
doing our stuff.

I sure liked that poem  
by Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
called  
"Love That Boy."

Because of two reasons  
I liked it:  
One is because  
my dad calls me  
in the morning  
just like that.  
He calls  
*Hey there, son!*

And also because  
when I had my  
yellow dog  
I loved that dog  
and I would call him

like this—  
I'd say—  
*Hey there, Sky!*

(His name was Sky.)

MARCH 22

My yellow dog  
followed me everywhere  
every which way I turned  
he was there  
wagging his tail  
and slobber  
coming out  
of his mouth  
when he was smiling  
at me  
all the time  
as if he was  
saying  
*thank you thank you thank you*  
*for choosing me*  
and jumping up on me  
his shaggy straggly paws  
on my chest  
like he was trying

to hug the insides  
right out of me.

And when us kids  
were playing outside  
kicking the ball  
he'd chase after it  
and push it with his nose  
push push push  
and getting slobber  
all over the ball  
but no one cared  
because he was such  
a funny dog  
that dog Sky  
that straggly furry  
smiling  
dog  
Sky.

And I'd call him  
every morning  
every evening  
*Hey there, Sky!*

MARCH 27

Yes, you can type up  
what I wrote about  
my dog Sky  
but don't type up  
that other secret one  
I wrote—  
the one all folded up  
in the envelope  
with tape on it.  
That one uses too many of  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers's  
words  
and maybe  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
would get mad  
about that.

APRIL 4

I was very glad  
to hear that  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
is not the sort of person  
who would get mad  
at a boy  
for using some of his words.

And thank you  
for typing up  
my secret poem  
the one that uses  
so many of  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers's  
words  
and I like what  
you put  
at the top:  
*Inspired by Walter Dean Myers.*

That sounds good  
~~to~~ my ears.

Now no one  
will think  
I just copied  
because I  
couldn't think  
of my own words.  
They will know  
I was  
*inspired by*  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers.

But don't put it  
on the board  
yet, okay?

Is Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
a live person?



And if he is  
do you think  
he could ever come  
to our city  
to our school  
to our class?

And if he did  
we should hide  
my poem  
with his words—  
hide it real good—  
just in case  
he *would* get mad  
about that.

APRIL 9

No.

No, no, no, no, no.

I can't do it.

You should do it.

You're a teacher.

APRIL 12

I don't agree  
that Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
might like to hear  
from a boy  
who likes his poems.

I think Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
would like to hear  
from a teacher  
who uses big words  
and knows how  
to spell  
and  
to type.

APRIL 17

Dear Mr. Walter Dean Myers,

You probably don't want to hear from me  
because I am only a boy  
and not a teacher  
and I don't use  
big words  
and you probably won't read this  
or even if you do read it  
you probably are way too busy  
to answer it  
let alone do the thing  
I am going to ask you  
and I want you to know  
that's okay  
because our teacher says  
writers are very very very very  
busy  
trying to write their words

and the phone is ringing  
and the fax is going  
and the bills need paying  
and sometimes they get sick  
(I hope you are not sick,  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers)  
or their family gets sick  
or their electricity goes off  
or the car needs fixing  
or they have to go  
to the grocery store  
or do the laundry  
or clean up messes.  
I don't know how  
you find the time  
to write your words  
if you have to do all that stuff  
and maybe you should get  
a helper.

So what I am asking you  
is this:

If you ever get time  
to leave your house  
and if you ever feel  
like visiting a school  
where there might be some kids  
who like your poems  
would you ever maybe  
think about maybe  
coming  
maybe  
to our school  
which is a clean place  
with mostly nice  
people in it  
and I think our teacher  
Miss Stretchberry  
would maybe even

make brownies for you  
because she sometimes  
makes them for us.

I hope I haven't too much  
stopped you from doing your  
writing of words  
and fixing your car  
and getting groceries  
and all that stuff—  
just to read this letter  
which probably is taking you  
maybe fifteen minutes  
and in that time  
you could've maybe  
written  
a whole new poem  
or at least the start  
of one  
and so I am sorry

for taking up your  
time  
and I understand  
if you can't come  
to our clean school  
and read some of your poems  
to us  
and let us see your face  
which I bet  
is a friendly face.

My name is Jack.

Bye, Mr. Walter Dean Myers.

APRIL 20

Did you mail it?

Did he answer yet?

APRIL 24

*Months???*

*It might*

*take months*

for Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
to answer my letter?

*If* he answers it?

I didn't know—  
until you explained—  
that the letter has to go  
to Mr. Walter Dean Myers's  
publisher company  
and then someone  
at the publisher company  
has to sort all the mail  
not just my letter  
but hundreds and hundreds  
of letters  
to hundreds of authors

all that big mess of mail  
piled up  
and someone sorting sorting sorting  
all that mail  
and then the letters for  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
go to him  
and maybe he's away  
maybe he's on vacation  
maybe he's sick  
maybe he's hiding in a room  
writing poems  
maybe he's baby-sitting  
his children or his grandchildren  
(if he's married and stuff)  
or maybe he has to go  
to the dentist  
or get that car fixed  
or maybe someone died  
(I really really really hope  
someone did not die)

so  
if you ask me  
it could take him  
*years*  
to get around  
to answering  
that letter  
so I guess  
we'd better  
just forget about it  
not count on it  
get it out of our minds  
do something else  
forget it.

APRIL 26

Sometimes  
when you are trying  
not to think about something  
it keeps popping back  
into your head  
you can't help it  
you think about it  
and  
think about it  
and  
think about it  
until your brain  
feels like  
a squashed pea.

MAY 2

Yes  
you can type up  
the thing about  
trying not to think about  
something  
but  
you'd better  
leave my name off it  
because it was  
just words  
coming out of my head  
and I wasn't paying  
too much attention  
to which words  
came out  
when.

MAY 7

Maybe you could  
show me  
how to use  
the computer  
and then  
I could type up  
my own words?

MAY 8

I didn't know about  
~~the~~ spell-checking thing  
inside the computer.  
It is like a miracle  
little brain  
in there  
a little helper brain.

But I am a slow typer person.  
Did you say there is  
a teaching-typing thing  
in that computer, too?  
Will it help me type  
better  
and  
faster  
*taptaptaptaptap*  
so my fingers  
can go as fast  
as my brain?



MAY 14

*(I typed this up myself.)*

### MY SKY

We were outside  
in the street  
me and some other kids  
kicking the ball  
before dinner  
and Sky was  
chasing chasing chasing  
with his feet going  
every which way  
and his tail  
wag-wag-wagging  
and his mouth  
slob-slob-slobbering  
and he was  
all over the place

smiling and wagging  
~~and~~ slobbering  
and making  
us laugh  
and my dad  
came walking up the street  
he was way down there  
near the end  
I could see him  
after he got off the bus  
and he was walk-walk-walking  
and I saw him wave  
and he called out  
"Hey there, son!"  
and so I didn't see  
the car  
coming from the other way  
until someone else—  
one of the big kids—

called out  
"Car!"  
and I turned around  
and saw a  
*blue car blue car*  
*splattered with mud*  
*speeding down the road*

And I saw Sky  
going after the ball  
wag-wag-wagging  
his tail  
and I called him  
"Sky! Sky!"  
and he turned his  
head  
but it was too late  
because the  
*blue car blue car*  
*splattered with mud*  
hit Sky

*thud thud thud*  
and kept on going  
in such a hurry  
~~so~~ fast  
so many miles to go  
it couldn't even stop  
and  
Sky  
was just there  
in the road  
lying on his side  
with his legs bent funny  
and his side heaving  
and he looked up at me  
and I said  
"Sky! Sky! Sky!"  
and then my dad  
was there  
and he lifted Sky  
out of the road  
and laid him on the grass

and  
Sky  
closed his eyes  
and  
he  
never  
opened  
them  
again  
ever.

MAY 15

I don't know.

If you put it on the board  
and people read it  
it might make them  
sad.

MAY 17

Okay.

I guess.

I'll put my name on it.

But I hope it doesn't make  
people feel too sad  
and if it does  
maybe you could  
think of something  
to cheer everybody up  
like maybe with  
some of those brownies  
you make  
the chocolate ones  
that are so good?

MAY 21

Wow!

Wow wow wow wow wow!

That was the best best BEST  
news  
ever  
I can't believe it.

Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
is really really really  
coming  
to our school?

He was coming  
to our city  
anyway  
to see his old buddy?

And he would be  
*honored*  
to visit  
our clean school  
and meet the mostly nice kids  
who like his poems?

We sure are lucky  
that his old buddy  
lives in our town.

WOW!!!

MAY 28

The bulletin board  
looks like it's  
blooming words  
with everybody's poems  
up there  
on all those  
colored sheets of paper  
yellow blue pink red green.

And the bookcase  
looks like it's  
sprouting books  
all of them by  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
lined up  
looking back at us  
waiting for  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers  
himself

to come  
to our school  
right into our classroom.

Wow!

MAY 29

I can't wait.  
I can't sleep.

Are you sure  
you hid my poem  
that was inspired  
by Mr. Walter Dean Myers?

I don't want to do  
any any anything  
to upset him.

JUNE 1

MR.

WALTER

DEAN

MYERS

DAY

I NEVER

in my whole life

EVER

heard anybody

who could talk

like that

Mr. Walter Dean Myers.

All of my blood

in my veins

was bubbling

and all of the thoughts

in my head

were buzzing

and

I wanted to keep

Mr. Walter Dean Myers

at our school

forever.

JUNE 6

Dear Mr. Walter Dean Myers,

Thank you  
a hundred million times  
for  
leaving your work  
and your family  
and your things-people-have-to-do  
to come and visit us  
in our school  
in our class.

We hope you liked your visit.  
We think maybe you did  
because  
you were  
smile-smile-smiling  
all over the place.

And when you read

~~your~~ poems  
you had the  
best best BEST  
voice

low and deep and friendly and warm  
like it was reaching out and  
wrapping us all up  
in a big squeeze  
and when you laughed  
you had the  
best best BEST  
laugh I've ever heard in my life  
like it was coming from way down deep  
and bubbling up and  
rolling and tumbling  
out into the air.



We hope we didn't ask you  
too many questions  
but we thank you  
for answering every which one  
and especially for saying  
that you would be  
*flattered*  
if someone used  
some of your words  
and especially if they  
added a note that  
they were  
*inspired by*  
Walter Dean Myers.

And it was nice of you  
to read all of our poems  
on the bulletin board  
and I hope it didn't  
make you  
too sad  
when you read the one

about my dog Sky  
getting smooshed in the road.  
And I think you liked  
the brownies, too,  
right?

Thank you for  
coming to see us  
Mr. Walter Dean Myers.

Inside this envelope  
is a poem  
using some of your words.  
I wrote it.  
It was  
*inspired by*  
you  
*Mr. Walter Dean Myers.*

From your number one fan,

*Jack*

*LOVE THAT DOG*

(INSPIRED BY WALTER DEAN MYERS)

BY JACK

*Love that dog,  
like a bird loves to fly  
I said I love that dog  
like a bird loves to fly  
Love to call him in the morning  
love to call him  
"Hey there, Sky!"*



SOME OF THE POEMS USED  
BY MISS STRETCHBERRY

The Red Wheelbarrow

BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

BY ROBERT FROST

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village, though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

The Tiger \*

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

*\*First stanza*

dog

BY VALERIE WORTH

Under a maple tree  
The dog lies down,  
Lolls his limp  
Tongue, yawns,  
Rests his long chin  
Carefully between  
Front paws;  
Looks up, alert;  
Chops, with heavy  
Jaws, at a slow fly,  
Blinks, rolls  
On his side,  
Sighs, closes  
His eyes: sleeps  
All afternoon  
In his loose skin.

The Pasture

BY ROBERT FROST

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

Street Music

BY ARNOLD ADOFF

This city:

the

always

noise

grinding

up from the

subways

under

ground:

slamming from bus tires

and taxi horns and engines

of cars and trucks in all

vocabularies

of

clash

flash

screeching

hot metal language

combinations:

as planes

overhead

roar

an

orchestra

of rolling drums

and battle blasts

assaulting

my ears

with

the

always

noise of

this city:

street music.



# The Apple

BY S. C. RIGG

s  
t  
e  
m

apple apple apple apple  
apple yum apple yum apple yum apple  
juicy juicy juicy juicy juicy juicy juicy juicy  
crunchy crunchy crunchy crunchy crunchy crunchy  
red yellow green red yellow green red yellow green red  
apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple  
apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple  
apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple  
yum delicious yum delicious yum delicious yum delicious yum  
yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum  
yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum  
yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum  
yum yum yum yum yum yum wormy worm yuk yuk yum yum  
yum yum yum yum yum yum wormy worm yuk yuk yum yum  
yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum  
yum delicious yum delicious yum delicious yum delicious  
apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple  
apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple apple  
apple apple apple apple apple apple apple  
red yellow green red yellow green red  
crunchy crunchy crunchy crunchy  
juicy juicy juicy juicy  
apple apple

Love That Boy\*

BY WALTER DEAN MYERS

Love that boy,  
like a rabbit loves to run  
I said I love that boy  
like a rabbit loves to run  
Love to call him in the morning  
love to call him  
"Hey there, son!"

*\*First stanza*

## Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech.

1. Jack doesn't want to write poetry at the beginning of the book. Why doesn't he want to?
2. In Jack's first poem, he writes:

So much depends  
upon  
a blue car  
splattered with mud  
speeding down the road.

Why is the blue car important to Jack?

3. What causes Miss Stretchberry to be so interested in Jack's first poem? Describe what Miss Stretchberry does to get Jack to write more poems, especially about the blue car.
4. How does Jack respond when Miss Stretchberry asks him to write about a pet? Why do you think Miss Stretchberry encourages Jack to write the poem, despite his reaction?
5. What are Jack's feelings toward Sky? Make a list of details from the book that describe Jack's feelings toward his dog.

*Note: The following questions are keyed to Bloom's taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15.*

6. Jack changes a great deal in the novel. Think about these changes. Then create a chart with two headings: "Beginning of school year" and "End of school year". Under each heading, list examples of the things Jack does, thinks, and says in the beginning of the year compared to the end of the year.
7. Imagine Miss Stretchberry has just asked Jack to write an essay telling what he has discovered about poetry and how it can change a person's life. What would the essay say?
8. Sky's death affected Jack deeply. If you had just lost a much-loved pet, what things could you or other people do to help you cope with the loss? Create a list of ideas.
9. Miss Stretchberry is able to convince Jack to write poetry and share his feelings even though he doesn't want to. Point out the qualities Miss Stretchberry has as a person and as a teacher that allow her to reach Jack.
10. Why does Jack fall in love with Walter Dean Myers's poetry? What effect does Mr. Myers's visit to the school have on Jack? How do you know?
11. There are many ways a poet can use words to paint a picture in a reader's mind. These devices include similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia, and more. Find examples of the techniques the poets use in *Love That Dog*. As a group, choose three verses from the novel that created the most vivid pictures.
12. How might Jack's life have been different if he hadn't had Miss Stretchberry as his teacher?

13. It's the end of the school year, and Jack wants to thank Miss Stretchberry for being such a great teacher. Compose a letter or write a poem from Jack that shows his appreciation for Miss Stretchberry.

14. Did reading *Love That Dog* change your point of view about poetry? In what ways? Explain your answer.

15. At the end of the book, the author includes poems by seven famous American poets. Which poem did you like best, and why?

## Activities

Choose your favorite poem at the end of *Love That Dog*, and in your own words, explain what the narrator is trying to say.

In "The Apple", by S. C. Rigg, and "My Yellow Dog", by Jack, the words form the shape of the poem's subject. Write your own "shape" poem.

Get a collection of poems by your favorite poet. Read the collection, then select your favorite poem. Create a collage that illustrates what the poem is about.